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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 005164

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/02/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [TU](#) [IS](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY PROVIDES THE STAGE FOR HISTORIC
ISRAEL-PAKISTAN MEETING

(U) Classified by Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner, E.O.
12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Istanbul was the scene of historic August 31 - September 1 meetings between Israel FM Shalom and Pakistani FM Kasuri. The Pakistanis contacted Turkish PM Erdogan for help in setting up the meeting; the Turks had no role in its political substance. The GOI appreciates Turkey's role. The Turkish MFA played no role in the meeting and MFA officials were notably out of the loop. End Summary.

Turkey's Logistical Role

12. (C) According to Egemen Bagis, a member of parliament from PM Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), Pakistani PM Aziz called Erdogan August 23, informed him of the meeting, and asked Erdogan to help organize it. Erdogan called Israel PM Sharon, who welcomed Turkish logistical assistance. Bagis, whom both Shalom and Kasuri thanked for his help, told us Turkey's role was "just a broker." Bagis himself organized transportation, lodgings and security.

13. (C) According to Bagis, Turkey had no role in the substance of the discussions, nor are there any plans for a Turkish role in future Israel/Pakistan contacts.

14. (C) Turkey has long sought a role as a high-profile intermediary between Israel and the Palestinians; both sides have quietly ignored the offer. However, Israeli First Secretary Bar-li Sa'ar told us the GOI appreciates Turkey's

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role in setting up this meeting; she praised Turkey's "discrete, trustworthy" management of the logistics.

Media Reaction

15. (U) Most Turkish dailies gave prominent coverage to the meeting, highlighting Turkey's role as a facilitator. Press accounts of exactly how Prime Minister Erdogan contributed to the process, however, diverged widely. Popular daily "Milliyet" reported that Pakistani PM Musharraf had called Erdogan recently to seek his assistance in setting up the meeting in Istanbul. Liberal daily "Radikal," however, claimed that the meeting was the result of Erdogan's "two-year effort" to broker open diplomat contacts between Israel and Pakistan. "Radikal" describes Erdogan's role as that of a "mediator." Notably, the Islamist-oriented, pro-government "Yeni Safak" failed to mention the meeting on today's front page (as was done by all of its major competitors), instead relegating the meeting to a cursory two-paragraph summary on page 13.

MFA Out of the Loop

16. (C) According to Bar-li Sa'ar, MFA officials played no role in setting up the meeting and were notably not even informed it was happening. Bar-li Sa'ar told us U/S Tuygan, the number two MFA official after FM Gul, was clearly not aware of the impending meeting when Israeli Ambassador Avivi, on his way to the meeting, spotted Tuygan August 31 in the Istanbul Airport. When Bar-li Sa'ar called the semi-official Anatolia News Agency (AA) late on August 31 with a press release about the meeting, AA refused to print it because, according to its representative, the MFA denied the meeting had occurred. Bar-li Sa'ar speculated this reflected the ongoing rivalry between PM Erdogan and FM Gul. Avivi briefed the MFA this morning.

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